

KERA Initiative Summary

4/29/04

Professional Development

The framers of the Kentucky Education Reform Act knew that to expect higher levels of learning for students requires providing opportunities for educators to improve their teaching and administrative skills. Legislators included in the law several important professional development provisions:

- A line item appropriation in the state budget;
- Four days of professional development for every teacher every year;
- Leadership development programs and comprehensive district improvement plans with embedded professional development supporting school needs;
- A requirement that at least 65 percent of designated professional development funds from the district flexible focus funds be spent at the local school level, empowering schools and school councils to develop and approve professional development plans to meet their needs;
- Use of state funds for all staff, including classified and parents on school councils and committees, to support initiatives that are consistent with the comprehensive school improvement plan.

Each school district has a professional development coordinator, and each school has a professional development planning committee that works with the coordinator to develop goals, activities and professional growth expectations for teachers and administrators.

The Department of Education supports an electronic consumer bulletin board that posts information regarding professional development providers and programs.

Professional development is now seen as a critical part of academic improvement:

- Schools that have reached the highest level of rewards in multiple cycles of the assessment and accountability system cite professional development as a major factor in their success;
- The majority of Kentucky schools have incorporated professional development within school functions, emerging from the shared concerns of school staff to improve learning opportunities for students;
- Local schools and districts are building their capacity to nurture their own instructional change efforts;
- Accountability for professional development results is changing the narrow focus of evaluation from event-based to measures of program impact over time;
- Collaboration between the Department of Education and the Education Professional Standards Board has resulted in more opportunities for teachers to achieve advanced degrees and pay status through their participation in professional development.

Allocations for professional development have increased from \$1.25 per student in average daily attendance in 1990-91 to \$23 per student in average daily attendance in 1999-00.

Statutory References: KRS 156.095, 156.0951, 160.345, 158.070